

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 733

By Whitson

A RESOLUTION to acknowledge that persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and that certain terms and phrases that may cause harm to such persons need to be removed from common usage.

WHEREAS, all people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect; and

WHEREAS, more than 100,000 people in the State of Tennessee are persons with intellectual disabilities; and

WHEREAS, persons with intellectual disabilities are our sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, friends, and neighbors; and

WHEREAS, the contributions of persons with intellectual disabilities are important and meaningful, as they are active participants in our communities, which they enrich, as they live, learn, and share their lives; and

WHEREAS, the language used to refer to persons with intellectual disabilities has a profound impact in shaping our beliefs and attitudes, driving policies and laws, influencing our feelings and decisions, and affecting the daily lives and inclusion, and exclusion, of persons with disabilities and their families; and

WHEREAS, certain terms—regardless of whether the terms are used to reference individuals with intellectual disabilities—are demeaning, hurtful, discriminatory, and create a barrier to the inclusion of such individuals as equal members of our community; and

WHEREAS, certain terms are used not only against people with intellectual disabilities but also as a way to criticize those with whom we may disagree, many without intending to cause harm and often happening casually; and

WHEREAS, research has shown seven in every ten social media posts are negative toward people with intellectual disabilities and six in every ten posts contain a derogatory slur; and

WHEREAS, individuals sometimes use derogatory language toward each other, whether in malice or in jest, that perpetuates negative connotations and attitudes toward persons with intellectual disabilities; and

WHEREAS, legislators represent all constituents, regardless of intellectual ability, and, as such, strive to show respect to all individuals, with or without intellectual disabilities, and they serve as leaders in the community, setting the standard of how people interact; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we pledge to avoid using the following terms and phrases verbally or in written form, as part of any work of the General Assembly or in personal use, and in any new statute or resolution:

1. Mentally retarded (or any derivative thereof);
2. Retarded (or any derivative thereof); and
3. Any other derogatory words or phrases that can be demeaning, show a critical or disrespectful attitude, or make a person with an intellectual disability feel minimized.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we further commit to strive to replace the aforementioned terms with the phrase "persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities" when referring to persons with intellectual disabilities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we further pledge to end the use of certain words or phrases verbally, whether done in malice or in jest, that are derogatory and perpetuate negative connotations and attitudes toward persons with disabilities, including students with disabilities.